



STEWARDS CORNER

Monthly Newsletter for Union Stewards

Steward as an Organizer: Getting Non-Members to Join

In past issues, we have discussed different elements of the steward's role as an organizer and your central role in internal organizing. Last month we focused on new-hire orientation and its role in building activists in the union; this month, we will discuss getting non-members to join the Union.

Union visibility

If someone walked into your workplace, would they know that it's a Union shop? Don't underestimate the power of Union T-shirts, hats, bumper stickers, mugs, and other swag. These are positive signs that the members believe in and support the Union. Non-members and new hires are going to see this, and it will make an impression.

Asking is the first step

While this may seem obvious, sometimes people haven't joined the Union because no one asked them.

Developing a list in your area of who is and isn't a member is crucial. Once you have your list, ask yourself: Who is the best person to ask them to join? How can I build a relationship with them? Do I know what they care about? Once you answer these questions, make a plan. When you approach, tell them why it is important to join and what you think they can contribute. It is harder to say no to a specific, individualized request.

Follow up if someone is showing hesitation

Having a non-member in your area that you have asked to join is a frustrating experience. After all, it's wrong not to belong. Meet with the non-member one-on-one at a time and place where you can have a quality conversation. Use active listening skills (80% listening and 20% speaking) to determine why a person is having a difficult time joining. Be prepared to answer

questions, dispel myths, and misinformation about the Union in a tactful but persuasive way.

Key talking points:

- Strong Unions with high membership get better contracts and have the leverage to solve problems in the workplace. **Strength in Numbers!**
- Everyone has a place in the Union, and every person in the bargaining unit matters.
- Together we can improve our workplace and quality of life.
- Active and strong Unions have safer workplaces
- Joining the Union gives you a voice in making positive changes that not only affect you but your family and community as well.

Be aware that sometimes a non-member will not join until they see the Union in action. Showing a non-member what the Union can do either through the contract or in addressing an issue the membership cares about can give that person the necessary push to move them to join.

Always have a membership card and new member kit with you when approaching non-members. Both are available through your staff rep!

One conversation may not be enough

There are a lot of reasons that a person may be hesitant to join. Those feelings may be deep-rooted and hard to overcome, but don't give up! Instead of ostracizing the non-member, take the time to develop a relationship with them. Understanding their issues may turn that "lost cause" into a strong, active members.

On Grievance Timelines:



"Whether it's five working days or 15 calendar days, stewards should always keep procedural timelines in mind when they are handling grievances. The grievance procedure is an effective tool for solving problems, but we've got to follow through on our responsibilities to make it work." Eddie Sharpe is a member of the USW Local 1441 Grievance Committee



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What Is a Grievance, Part 2: Following Timelines

Last month’s *Stewards Corner* discussed how the collective bargaining agreement (**CBA**) defines a grievance. This issue looks at another part of grievance handling: following timelines. While details can get lost in the busy shuffle of work, family, and Union responsibilities, we cannot afford to miss them. **If we are not timely in filing our grievance, we may forfeit our ability to do so.**

Follow the Steps

Your grievance procedure should clearly layout the timeline for filing a grievance, as well as the deadlines for the employer to respond and the Union to appeal, if necessary. At each step meeting, the Union and Employer explain their positions and discuss settlement. Who is involved at each step is also likely spelled out in your process?

Stewards should take notes and compile documents from every meeting they participate in. Comprehensive files are essential if a grievance escalates to arbitration.

My Grievance Procedure

Use YOUR CBA to fill in the blanks below. Doing this will familiarize you with important details in your grievance procedure (NOTE: your CBA may have additional steps not outlined on this page).

- Procedure found in **Article** _____, (Article Title _____), **Section(s)** _____, **Page (s)** ____.
- Grievances **must be filed** within _____ days from the time the problem occurred.
 - Does it specify “**calendar days**,” “**working days**” or something else _____? (Circle or write in the appropriate term)

Step	Union	Management
1	Days to File: _____ Who (Steward?): _____ Written or Oral? _____	Days to respond: _____ Who (front line supervisor?): _____ Written or Oral? _____
2	Days to appeal: _____ Who: _____ Written or Oral? _____	Days to respond: _____ Who: _____ Written or Oral? _____
3	Days to appeal: _____ Who: _____ Written or Oral? _____	Days to respond: _____ Who: _____ Written or Oral? _____
4	Days to respond: _____ Who: _____ Written or Oral? _____	Days to respond: _____ Who: _____ Written or Oral? _____
Arbitration	Days to appeal: _____	

The USW has a lot of resources to help you represent your coworkers and enforce your CBA. Your USW Staff Representative can help you with questions about the grievance timeline in your CBA.

A lot of work goes into grievance-handling; missing a deadline can jeopardize all of it. Track grievances on a calendar or set alerts on your phone to remind yourself about deadlines!



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